



growing leaders

July 13, 2004

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: MB Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell:

For over 20 years, Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP) has worked to achieve full participation and equality for Asian Pacific Americans (APAs), and actively supports increased civic participation by APAs. One issue recently brought to our attention is a proposal being considered by the Commission that would increase the fees consumers pay to use pre-paid calling cards. We urge you to oppose any proposal that would result in an increase in the cost of using pre-paid calling cards.

The population of APAs has doubled every decade and is projected to be the fastest growing group in the next decade. Perceptions and stereotypes continue to lump all APAs as a highly successful and the widely held assumption is that APAs are NOT part of a disadvantaged minority racial group. However, these assumptions overlook and ignore the fact that, there remains a disproportionate and significant number of APAs living in poverty. For these citizens living with low incomes, calling cards have become a valuable resource for maintaining contacts with neighbors and relatives. Calling cards offer those in our community, who exist on low incomes, a series of pay-as-you-go spending choices, making them a far more attractive – and affordable – option than subscribing to a monthly service.

The use of pre-paid calls by those living in poverty is not surprising. About 60% of card users earning less than \$20,000 annually use them on a regular basis. And Asian Pacific Americans are among the fastest growing users of pre-paid cards.

By imposing new fees to calls made via pre-paid cards, the FCC would be increasing costs for those who can least afford them and decreasing the buying power of all low-income card users. A regulatory shift such as this only stands to benefit the companies who need it least. On behalf of LEAP, I ask that you reject any proposals that would add new fees and charges to pre-paid calling cards.

Sincerely,

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